



The Lone Worker Protection Playbook

How to respond to lone worker incidents up to 60 minutes sooner using 7 simple automations

- Detect incidents automatically
- Improve incident response times
- Reduce incident severity
- Lower your risk exposure
- Boost lone worker confidence

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Contents

3. Introduction

5. What goes wrong when people work alone

8. The cost of slow detection and delayed response

11. Why traditional lone worker controls leave gaps

13. Part 1: Putting the right infrastructure in place

18. Part 2: The seven automations that close the gaps

26. What changes once these automations go live

29. Protecting your lone workers with Sense Workplace



Introduction

A lone worker is anyone who works without close or direct physical supervision. For example, people who:

- open or close buildings on their own
- visit clients or patients alone
- patrol sites or estates out of hours
- travel between locations independently
- respond to call-outs without a colleague present

According to the British Safety Council, around one in five workers in the UK regularly works alone. These workers tend to be highly motivated and self-driven – but they are also one of the most vulnerable cohorts of workers. And that's because not only do they face unique risks when compared to other workers, but when something goes wrong, there's no immediate visibility, often leading to a much slower response.

That delay can change the entire outcome. Minor incidents have more time to escalate, and injuries can become more serious. Which is why, as an employer, the Health and Safety Executive considers you responsible for managing health and safety risks before you let people work alone. And this applies to anyone contracted to work for you – including self-employed people.

In practice, this creates a difficult challenge. Lone working is often unavoidable, but traditional ways of managing risk – manual supervision, or relying on workers to raise the alarm – leave significant gaps.

This playbook focuses on closing those gaps – not by adding extra steps, but by implementing seven easy automations that consistently detect risk earlier, and more reliably, in the areas where traditional risk management practices fail.



What Goes Wrong When People Work Alone

Most lone worker incidents aren't worrying because the tasks people are assigned to are inherently unsafe. The reason they're usually worrying is because hazards that are manageable when somebody else is present, become far more serious when somebody is alone.

The Health and Safety Executive highlights several categories of risk that disproportionately affect lone workers:

- Physical injury and medical emergencies
- Violence, aggression and confrontation
- Stress, fatigue and isolation



Physical injury and medical emergencies

These include slips, trips, falls, manual handling injuries, and sudden medical events.

On their own, these risks are common in many workplaces. What changes for lone workers is the absence of immediate assistance. If no one is nearby, even a minor injury can go unnoticed for a long period, delaying treatment and increasing severity. And where a worker is incapacitated, they may be unable to call for help at all.

The risk of a physical injury occurring may also increase when lone workers are based in places outside of your organisation's control, such as client sites, patient homes, or public spaces.

Violence, aggression, and confrontation

Lone workers are more exposed to violence and aggression because they are often dealing directly with members of the public, patients, or clients without support. This is particularly relevant in roles involving home visits, enforcement, security, or customer-facing work.

In these situations, raising an alarm is not always possible or safe. Workers may avoid making a visible call for help because it could escalate the situation, or they may be physically prevented from doing so. As a result, incidents can unfold without any immediate external awareness.

Most organisations pair their workers up in situations where violence or confrontation could be a risk factor, but this isn't always easy to predict – and isn't always operationally viable.

Stress, fatigue, and isolation

Some of the most persistent lone worker risks are less visible. Working alone can increase stress, fatigue, and feelings of isolation, particularly where there is limited contact with colleagues or managers.

The HSE highlights that stress and other psychosocial factors can impair judgement, slow reaction times, and increase the likelihood of mistakes.

These risks often build gradually and contribute to both a higher chance of incidents and poorer outcomes when something does go wrong.

The common weakness: delayed awareness

Across all of these risk types, the same issue appears repeatedly: lack of timely supervision and monitoring.

Traditional lone worker controls often assume that:

- check-ins will happen as planned
- alarms will be raised when needed
- someone will notice quickly if they don't

But when monitoring depends on manual action or chance encounters, gaps are inevitable. And by the time someone realises there is a problem, the opportunity for early intervention may well have passed.

The Cost of Slow Detection and Delayed Response

When something goes wrong with a lone worker, time is the most expensive variable. Not just in terms of direct financial cost, but also in terms of lost productivity, legal exposure, and the grave cost of human health and wellbeing.

● Direct financial impact

The longer it takes to realise there's a problem, the more serious the outcome tends to be – and the higher the direct cost to your organisation. This shows up clearly in injury data, absence figures, and enforcement outcomes.

Here are a few numbers to consider:

- £22.9 Billion. The total cost to UK employers and society each year due to workplace injury and ill health
- £10,000. The average cost per case of a non-fatal workplace injury
- £40,000+. The cost per incident rises when injuries result in 7+ days off work

These figures include lost output, sick pay, administration, and investigation – they do not include legal costs, fines, or reputational damage.

Delayed response is one of the main factors that pushes incidents into the higher-cost category. Injuries and medical events that are not quickly treated can deteriorate, and confrontations can very easily escalate without early intervention.

● **Lost productivity impact**

Each year, over 40 million working days are lost in Great Britain due to workplace injury and work-related ill health. Lone worker incidents often sit at the more disruptive end of this spectrum because they are discovered late, harder to reconstruct, and more likely to require investigation and escalation. There is also a knock-on effect:

- shifts need covering at short notice
- services are disrupted
- managers are pulled into reactive work
- supervisors spend time chasing information instead of running operations

These costs rarely appear against a single line item, but they absolutely show up in terms of missed SLAs, poor customer experience, and over-stretched teams.

● **Lost productivity impact**

The Health and Safety Executive is explicit: employers must identify lone worker risks in advance and put proportionate controls in place, including appropriate supervision and monitoring. And you need to be able to prove that such risk-mitigation measures were taken! When incidents are investigated, you'll find yourself answering questions such as:

- how quickly was the issue identified?
- what monitoring was in place?
- were there gaps in supervision or escalation?

Where there is a long delay between an incident occurring and it being detected, those gaps are difficult to defend.

● The human cost

The other cost that doesn't sit neatly on a balance sheet is the cost to human health and happiness. We already know that lone working can increase stress and fatigue, but this is made far worse when workers feel unsupported or isolated.

In practical terms, this means that workers who believe help would arrive slowly – if at all – are more likely to:

- feel anxious when working alone
- disengage from their role
- take stress-related absence
- leave lone worker roles altogether

We spoke to one set of community care workers who explained that although they were given panic alarms during their shift, they very rarely took them on visits – because during the rare times these alarms were used, they were sending SOS calls to empty offices or unmanned phone lines, which totally eroded trust in the system.

Over time, a delayed or absent response when a worker calls for help, means that lone worker positions suffer higher turnover, and become harder to fill – an extra strain on what is already a heavily pressured part of your workforce.

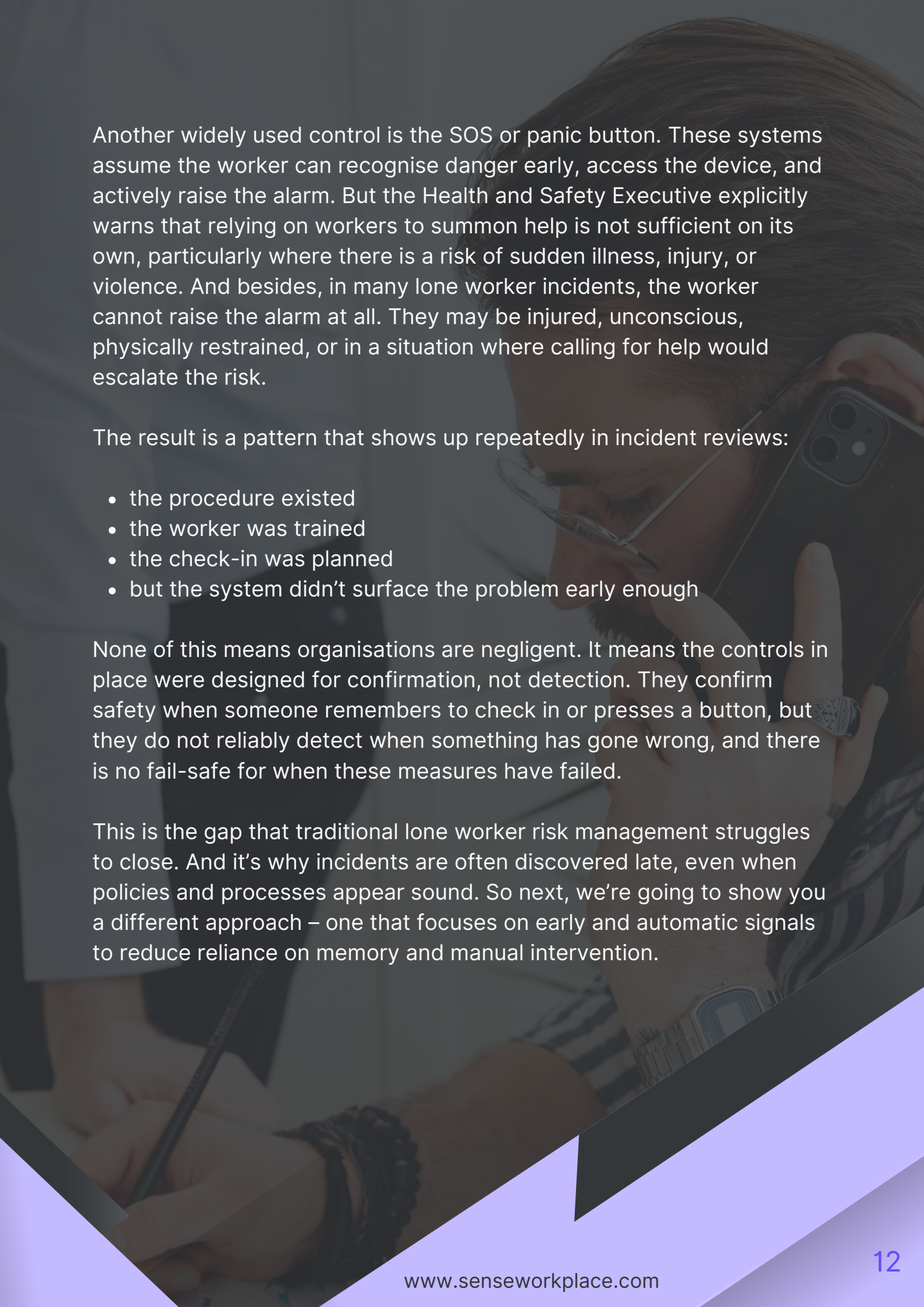
Why Traditional Lone Worker Controls Leave Gaps

If you hire lone workers, especially those working at client sites or in public places, you most likely already have lone worker controls in place. These controls probably include risk assessments, health and safety training, pre-defined check-in times, a well-defined SOS process, and a set of escalation rules for what to do when things go wrong.

On paper, this often looks adequate. But the problem is that many of these controls depend on perfect human behaviour – which, in real-world operations, is simply an unreliable assumption.

For example, one of the most common controls is the scheduled welfare check. A worker is expected to call in, text, or confirm they are safe at regular intervals. Which, in theory, works well. But in reality, check-ins are missed, delayed or deprioritised when shifts get busy, when phones run out of battery, or when routines change. Then, because missed check-ins get normalised, their impact is reduced when an actual emergency happens.





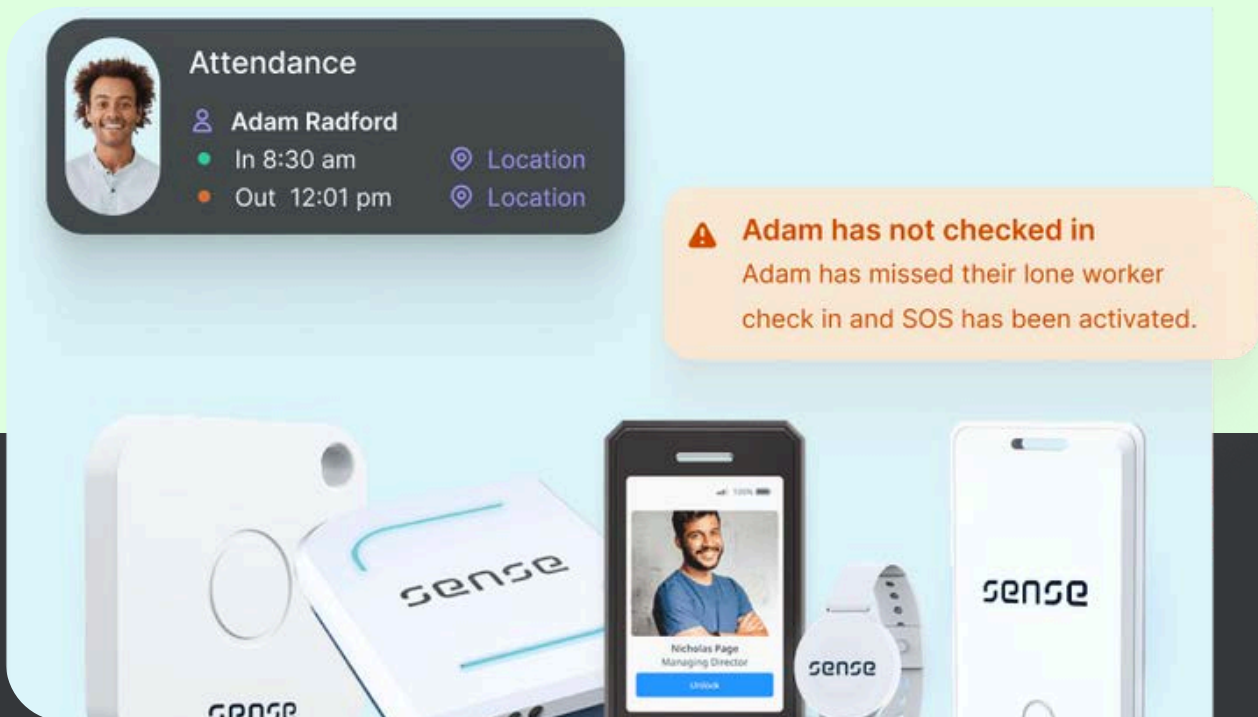
Another widely used control is the SOS or panic button. These systems assume the worker can recognise danger early, access the device, and actively raise the alarm. But the Health and Safety Executive explicitly warns that relying on workers to summon help is not sufficient on its own, particularly where there is a risk of sudden illness, injury, or violence. And besides, in many lone worker incidents, the worker cannot raise the alarm at all. They may be injured, unconscious, physically restrained, or in a situation where calling for help would escalate the risk.

The result is a pattern that shows up repeatedly in incident reviews:

- the procedure existed
- the worker was trained
- the check-in was planned
- but the system didn't surface the problem early enough

None of this means organisations are negligent. It means the controls in place were designed for confirmation, not detection. They confirm safety when someone remembers to check in or presses a button, but they do not reliably detect when something has gone wrong, and there is no fail-safe for when these measures have failed.

This is the gap that traditional lone worker risk management struggles to close. And it's why incidents are often discovered late, even when policies and processes appear sound. So next, we're going to show you a different approach – one that focuses on early and automatic signals to reduce reliance on memory and manual intervention.



Part 1: Putting the Right Infrastructure in Place

There are seven easy automations that you can build, each in less than an hour, to protect your lone workers where other measures fail. But first, we're going to talk about some of the essential infrastructure you need in place for these automations to work.

We're going to talk about this in terms of Sense Workplace technology – but don't get too hung up on that, because ultimately, the same principles apply whatever technology you use, as long as it can tell you where a person is, whether they are moving, and whether they need help.

1. Wearable Badges and Tags

For hands-on lone workers – people moving around sites, travelling between locations, or working away from a desk – safety systems only work if the signal stays with them.



Mobile phones don't cut it

Some people use mobile phones for this, but mobile phones are limited to GPS for location, they are not always appropriate or allowed (in dangerous or sensitive environments), they require permissions to remain enabled in order for features to work, and they are simply not practical to operate for most busy workers.

Wearable location and movement detection

Equipping your lone workers with a Sense Badge or a Sense Tag shows you continuous presence and movement information, even when a worker is busy, distracted, or under pressure – even indoors.

Workers simply clip their wearable to their bag, belt or pocket, and carry it with them throughout their shift. They have the option to make SOS calls, but these wearables can also include important passive detection capabilities, from hard fall detection and no movement alerts, through to environmental sensors and warnings – allowing your system to pick up on situations where something may be wrong, but the worker cannot take action themselves.

2. Indoor Location Gateways



Although GPS may be OK for some situations, it isn't always enough to simply know that somebody has arrived at a general location. In an emergency, you also need to know where they are inside the building.

Easy and accurate indoor location

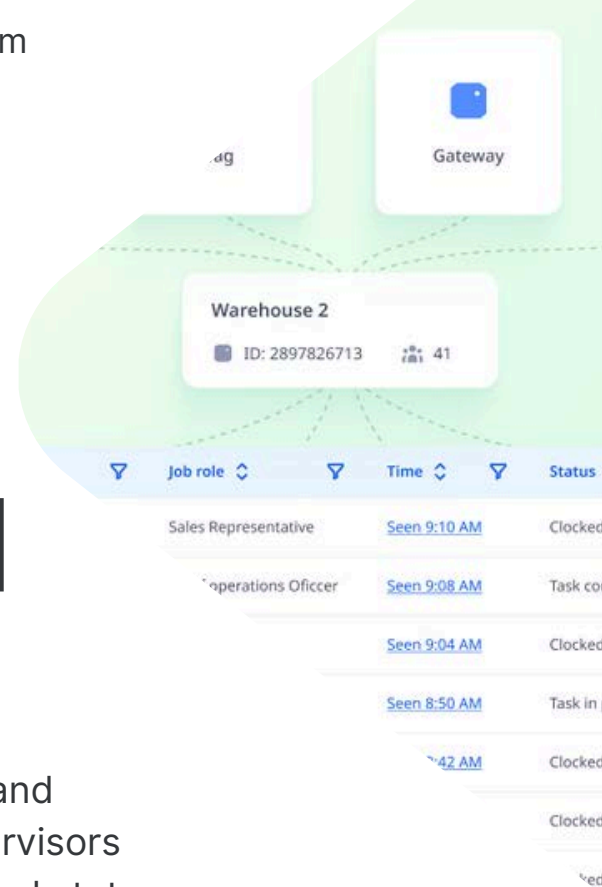
Sense Gateways are fixed devices installed around a site that detect nearby Badges and Tags. Because they plug directly into standard sockets, they can be deployed quickly without specialist installation.

Together with the wearables, Gateways allow your system to:

- automatically detect arrivals and departures
- understand which areas or rooms someone has been in
- track movement without requiring manual check-ins or room logging

This removes a major failure point in traditional lone worker processes – relying on people to remember to check in, or remember to report their location – and ensures that safety alerts lead responders to the right place, not just the right site.

3. Sense Presence Dashboard



You need a place to consolidate your location and movement information – somewhere your supervisors can always see a each lone worker's location and status.

Easy and accurate indoor location

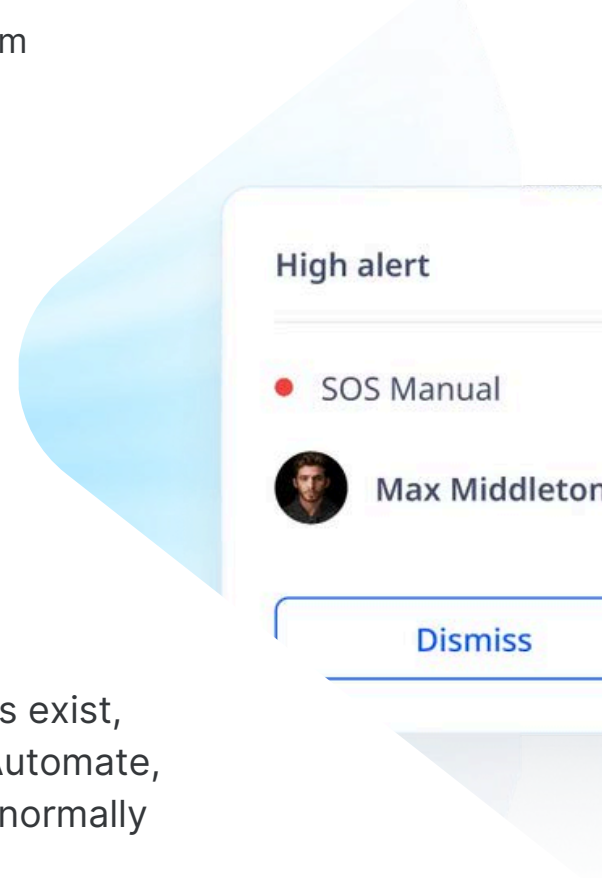
All of this information feeds into the Sense Presence Dashboard, which gives supervisors and managers a real-time view of what's happening.

From a single screen, they can see:

- who is on site and who is working alone
- when someone last moved
- where they were last detected
- whether they are where they're expected to be

This visibility matters because it turns lone worker safety from a series of assumptions into something concrete. Supervisors don't need to chase for updates or wait for calls – they can see status at a glance, and focus only on exceptions.

4. Sense Automate



Once presence, movement, and location signals exist, they can be used consistently through Sense Automate, to turn data into action, where human process normally fails.

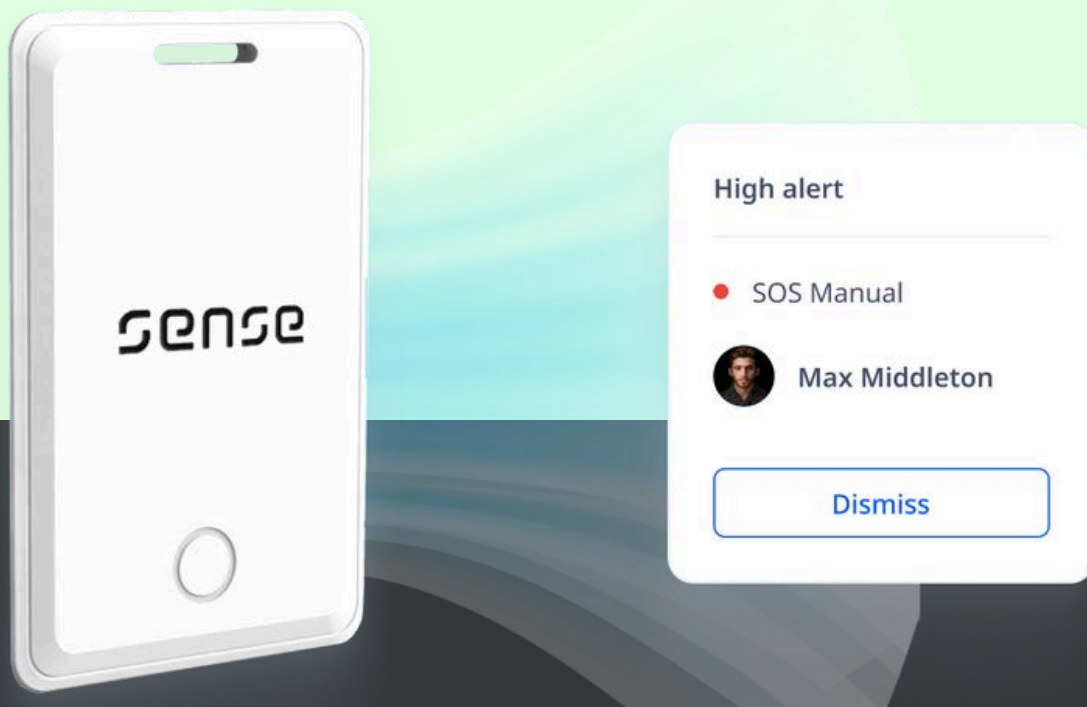
Build consistent, automatic workflows

Sense Automate lets you build your own workflows to determine things like:

- what should happen if a check-in is missed
- how long a worker can remain inactive before an alert is raised
- who gets notified, and how escalation should work

This is where lone worker protection moves from visibility to intervention. Instead of waiting for someone to notice a problem, the system reacts automatically when something deviates from normal.

And it's these automation workflows that will actually do most of the heavy lifting for you, once the infrastructure is in place – which we will show you now, with seven important automations that close the safety gaps in your lone worker protection processes.



Part 2: The Seven Automations that Close the Gaps

Once you have the right data being collected from your lone workers, the next step is to use it consistently, in a way that actually helps to protect and support them. Remember that this is not meant to replace human judgement – rather, it's designed to remove the delays and blind spots that manual processes tend to create.

Here are the seven automations that our clients have found most effective for tackling the most common failure points when it came to lone worker safety. Each of these automations should take you less than an hour to set up, and our team of UK experts will be happy to help if you have any questions.

1. Automated Lone Worker Identification

Many lone worker failures happen because nobody knew a person was working alone, meaning protections weren't activated. This workflow removes that, by identifying when a person is working alone, and applying a "lone worker" tag within Sense Workplace.

This workflow requires any potential lone worker to have a Sense Badge or Tag (whichever is most appropriate), and the logic of the workflow should look something like this:

- If headcount on site = 1
- Mark "Lone Worker" status active

Of course, there are other ways to set this up – for example, you might wish to identify a lone worker as somebody who has a set amount of distance between them and the nearest colleague.

One multi-site FM provider used this workflow across 6 high-risk locations, where the high number of "unprotected" lone working instances – people working alone with nobody else aware – were of significant concern. This workflow reduced these instances by 92%, roughly equivalent to 40 shifts a month.

It may be enough for you to simply know who is working alone at any given time, so that your supervisors are generally aware – but you can also connect this workflow with others, so that lone worker-specific workflows are switched on automatically whenever a person is given a "lone worker" tag.



2. Automated Site Check-In and Safe Check-Out

One of the most common blind spots in lone worker safety is simply not knowing when someone has arrived on site, or whether they've left when expected. This workflow removes that uncertainty by automatically checking workers in and out based on presence data.

This workflow looks something like this:

- Badge or tag detected on site
- Enter check-in time and mark status as “present”
- Badge or tag not detected for 5 minutes
- Enter check-out time and mark visit as “complete”

This gives you accurate check-in and check-out data based on actual location data, meaning you no longer need to rely on manual sign-in sheets, scanned QR codes, or phone calls to see where people are. Not only does this help you know where your lone workers are, but it gives you verifiable proof of presence for timesheets and payroll.



3. Delayed Departure Flag

Lone workers staying on site longer than expected is a frequent but often invisible risk. It's not always a sign of difficulty – it's usually something innocent like a colleague sticking around to chat to a friend. But it can also be a sign that a person has landed in difficulty and is struggling to get away.

Using shift schedules and presence data, Sense Workplace can identify when a worker remains on site beyond their planned finish time. The workflow would look something like this:

- Badge or tag still detected 10+ minutes after expected shift end
- Mark status as “delayed departure”

You can set whatever time delay you like here – longer safety times work better on longer shifts such as spending a full day on site with a client, whereas shorter safety times work better for multiple, shorter visits such as a community mental health nurse travelling between different patients' houses. What you do with this information will highly depend on the context of your organisation.

For example, a security services company used this workflow across overnight patrols, where supervisors previously relied on manual confirmation of arrival and exit. Within the first two months, the system flagged 14 delayed departures, two of which required follow-up after workers were found to be on-site or nearby well beyond the expected shift end time. In both cases, fatigue was identified as a contributing factor, prompting the business to adjust rotas and introduce additional safeguards around overnight work.



4. Scheduled Safety Check-Ins

In some lone worker situations, actively raising an alarm isn't safe or practical. For example, in a situation with a confrontation risk, they may feel that activating an SOS device may antagonise the situation.

This workflow addresses that by requiring high-risk lone workers instead to manually confirm their "safe" status at pre-defined intervals – this does not raise risk in safe situations, and instead turns inaction into the signal that something may be wrong. The logic for this workflow is straightforward:

- Require manual check-in every 15 minutes
- If check-in is missing, send reminder notification
- Wait 5 minutes
- If check-in is still missing, notify supervisor and share location

A healthcare provider used this approach for community staff carrying out high-risk home visits. Previously, managers required phone calls between visits to confirm all was OK, with staff given SOS devices for emergencies. After switching to 15-minute reverse check-ins, staff reported feeling safer when visiting patients alone, and in several cases, missed check-ins triggered early follow-up before situations were able to escalate, reducing the number of recorded conflicts.

This workflow is most effective when paired with escalation rules – workflows that define how missed check-ins should be handled. It is also advisable to give staff a way to manually raise the alarm, too – we have included a manual SOS workflow as the final automation in this guide.



5. No Movement Detected

Not all lone worker incidents allow the worker to take action. This workflow is designed to detect situations where a worker may be injured, unconscious, or otherwise incapacitated.

Using movement data from the Sense Badge, Sense Workplace can identify when a lone worker has not moved for a defined period of time – with an escalation being triggered automatically if that threshold is exceeded:

1. No movement detected for 5 minutes
2. Notify supervisor and share location

As with other workflows, the details are context specific – you may have workers who expect to be still for much longer than 5 minutes at a time, or the job may be very physically demanding meaning you expect constant movement. Set your intervals accordingly.

This workflow also works better when connected to a defined escalation process, e.g. “Attempt phone call, if no answer send the nearest available worker to the location”.

If you’re only using the Sense Tags, you can create a version of this workflow based on a person having been seen at a set zone for an extended period of time, especially if you expected them to be moving between zones. Or, if you’re using the Sense Badges, you can also enhance this workflow by using the “Hard Fall Detection” feature – meaning you can detect heavy impacts instantly, without having to wait for a period of no movement.



6. Automated Welfare and Wellbeing Check-In

Not all lone worker risk is immediate or physical. This workflow introduces a lightweight way to monitor wellbeing trends over time.

Using Sense Automate, organisations can schedule periodic welfare check-ins for lone workers. These are not emergency alerts, but prompts designed to identify patterns such as repeated non-engagement or concerning responses.

This workflow should look like:

- Send welfare check-in every 30 days
- If response is positive, reset 30-day timer
- If response is negative, escalate
- If 2 consecutive responses missed, escalate

The welfare check-in can be as simple as a pulse survey questionnaire, sent to the worker's mobile phone, their Sense Badge, or any other communication tool you're using. A simple "How are you doing at work?" with a multiple-choice answer will suffice.

The purpose of this workflow is to help bring to the surface any hidden issues going on, including longer-term stress, which can be more difficult to spot when people are working alone.



7. Manual SOS & Escalation

Most of these automations are passive, meaning they will work in the background until escalation is needed. But there will always be situations where a lone worker knows they need immediate help, and in such situations, you should at least be sure they have a way to call for that help.

The way you design this automation will depend on whether you are using a Sense Badge, a Sense Tag, or other technology. But in effect, it looks like this:

- Button pushed (this could be a particular pattern, e.g. double press or long hold)
- Raise high-priority alert
- Share location with supervisor
- Share location with nearest colleague

A housing association issued SOS-enabled badges to staff carrying out estate visits. Over a 12-month period, SOS was triggered 14 times. While most incidents were resolved quickly, the key improvement was response speed: average acknowledgement time dropped from 12 minutes to under 3 minutes compared to their previous phone-based process.

SOS workflows are most effective when combined with accurate presence data, ensuring responders know exactly where help is needed.



What Changes Once These Automations Go Live

Once lone worker risk is detected earlier and more consistently, the impact is immediate – and it will show up in places you are likely already measuring.

● You will detect issues faster

Traditional lone worker controls often surface problems only at the next scheduled check-in – which, depending on your operations, could be up to 60-120 minutes after an issue has occurred.

The automated workflows shown above can reduce that detection window to single-figure minutes.

In fact, across organisations using automated check-ins, movement detection, and presence-based alerts, it's typical to see:

- 30-60 minutes earlier detection compared to manual processes
- Single-digit minute detection for incapacitation scenarios using no-movement triggers
- Immediate alerts for SOS events, with consistent escalation

The reason this faster detection is important, is because it changes the outcome. Injuries are treated sooner, situations are de-escalated earlier, and incidents are less likely to become severe.

● Incident severity (and cost) drops

HSE cost modelling shows that the severity of an incident is a major driver of total cost.

By shortening the time between incident and response, organisations typically see:

- Fewer incidents progressing to extended absence
- Lower average cost per incident
- Reduced need for investigation and escalation

Even a small reduction in severity can have a disproportionate financial impact. Preventing just one incident from crossing the “seven days’ absence” threshold can avoid tens of thousands of pounds in direct and indirect costs.

● Reduced manual overhead

Automated detection also changes how time is spent operationally. Organisations who use a combination of the above workflows tend to report:

- 2-5 hours per week per supervisor reclaimed from manual lone worker checks
- Fewer “unknown status” events at the start and end of shifts
- Less reactive firefighting when something goes wrong

This is because instead of supervisors chasing missed calls, checking spreadsheets, or manually confirming who is on site, the system automatically surfaces the exceptions that matter.

● Improved (and defensible) compliance

When incidents are reviewed, the question changes from “why didn’t anyone know?”, to “what did the system detect, and when?” This is because automated workflows create:

- Consistent application of controls
- Clear evidence of monitoring and escalation
- Fewer gaps that are hard to explain after the fact

This strengthens your duty-of-care posture, and reduces exposure when incidents are investigated both internally or externally.

● More confidence amongst frontline roles

The big change that doesn’t always show up on your balance sheet probably has the most long-term impact. And this is the impact these automations have on your workers themselves.

When lone workers know:

- Somebody knows where they are
- Somebody will notice if they miss a check-in
- Help will arrive quickly if needed

...their confidence increases, and they will go to work feeling more confident. This has proven to result in better engagement amongst lone worker roles, lower stress-related absence, and better staff retention in roles that are otherwise hard to fill.

Protecting Your Lone Workers with Sense Workplace

Solution 1

If you want to understand what this could look like in your organisation, the most effective starting point is a short, practical walkthrough with one of our friendly, UK-based experts.

In that session, we'll work with you to:

- Map your lone worker scenarios and risk points
- Identify where detection is currently slow or inconsistent
- show how presence, wearables, and automation could be combined in your environment
- Outline which workflows would make the biggest difference first

There's no obligation, and no expectation that everything needs to be implemented at once. The aim is simply to help you understand what earlier detection could look like in practice, and whether it would meaningfully reduce risk in your operation.

[If that would be useful, book a short conversation with one of our team to explore it further, today.](#)